

## **2004 Governor's School of Excellence Winners**

### **Chelsea Heights School, Atlantic City School District**

[http://www.acboe.org/Schools/Chlesea\\_Heights/chlesea\\_heights.html](http://www.acboe.org/Schools/Chlesea_Heights/chlesea_heights.html)

In 2001, Chelsea Heights School in Atlantic City was labeled as a school needing improvement, but the administration and staff extensively examined what they needed to do to improve their scores. In 2002, their efforts paid off as they significantly raised achievement. They made Adequate Yearly Progress in both language arts literacy and mathematics. The Chelsea Heights School is committed to providing a safe, positive and well rounded educational environment that fosters the growth and development of all students. The educational program emphasizes the acquisition of life skills and encourages all students to perform to the best of their ability while developing self esteem and mutual respect for peers and teachers.

### **John C. Milanesi Elementary School, Buena Regional School District**

At the John C. Milanesi Elementary School, its positive school climate and stimulating, enriched learning environment is the result of the collaborative efforts of its teachers, supportive staff, students and parents. The school has made significant strides in academic achievement through its diverse, quality programs such as its supplemental reading intervention program, its partnership with John Hopkins University using the Success For All Math Wings program, and expanded in-class support services. Literacy scores rose 14 percentage points while mathematics scores rose 18 percentage points.

### **Hoover Elementary School, Bergenfield School District**

<http://www.bergenfield.org/schools/hoover/index.html>

"Many Faces from Different Places All Learning Together," sets the tone of an exciting atmosphere that instills self-esteem, success and pride for all students who attend Hoover School. The uniqueness of working successfully with an 89% culturally diverse population within a limited facility, without a gymnasium or all-purpose room, requires the administrator, teachers, parents and students to work collaboratively. Since the inception of the state testing, Hoover School has taken a pro-active stance. Thus, state assessments have increased to the point where 90% of all students have successfully achieved proficient or advanced proficient levels in literacy and mathematics for the past three years.

### **Bret Harte Elementary School, Cherry Hill Public Schools**

<http://harte.cherryhill.k12.nj.us/>

Bret Harte Elementary School is a community-based school with outstanding levels of proficiency in language arts and mathematics across different populations. Systemic, ongoing and focused staff development provides the tools for teaching and learning that support this academic achievement. A model of shared decision-making includes every member of the community in school improvement efforts. The 27 standing PTA committees demonstrate the high level of parental involvement. Bret Harte Elementary School has been recognized by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and has received grants from "Cure Autism Now" and Comcast that support these outstanding programs.

### **Cape May City Elementary School, Cape May City School District**

Cape May City Elementary School believes that their children learn best when they are in a safe environment where they feel loved, accepted, supported and challenged. The school believes that parents are most important to the foundation of the children's education and serve as partners. Cape May City Elementary School believes the role of the community is to support and be involved with the school. The school believes the staff serves as educational leaders, instructors, and mentors to a diverse body of students, and their efforts are all aimed at increasing student achievement. This is evidenced by the facts that 89% of students scored proficient or advanced proficient on the NJ ASK-4 for mathematics and that 95% scored proficient or advanced proficient for language arts. The school's goal is to help the students recognize and develop their full potential so that they may improve the quality of their lives, their families, their communities, their country and their world.

### **Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Academy, East Orange School District**

<http://www.eastorange.k12.nj.us/index.php/content/view/3/26/>

The culture of a school is extremely powerful. During the past two years, the learning community of Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Academy, consisting of teachers, parents and staff, has worked together to create a learner-centered culture that exudes excellence. The school has achieved significant improvement by setting high expectations and standards, demanding content and instruction that ensures student achievement, creating a culture of adult learning, and using multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools.

### **Alexander Street School, Newark Public Schools**

<http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/alexander/index.htm>

The Alexander Street School community strives to create a safe and nurturing environment that encourages high expectations, respect, creativity, and success for all students. The dedicated staff of Alexander Street School has maintained a consistently excellent instructional focus, which has facilitated and sustained increased achievement in literacy and mathematics. Because of the staff's willingness to take risks and experiment with innovative avenues to increase student achievement, Alexander Street School has been successful in significantly improving test scores. Parental activities have increased parental involvement and helped to foster closer ties between school and home. It is because of the tireless efforts, commitment and "Unity of Purpose" exhibited by the entire Alexander Street School community, and support from the district leadership, that the school is continuing to excel.

### **Branch Brook School, Newark Public Schools**

[http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/branch\\_brook/index.htm](http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/branch_brook/index.htm)

The staff at Branch Brook School provides the students, parents and the community with an opportunity to collaborate in a governance structure that supports ongoing instructional improvement through the philosophy of multiple intelligences, authentic cross-curricular activities, and informed attention to individual learning styles. In a challenging yet supportive environment that fosters the unity of purpose, and through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders who are supportive of a powerful learning community, Branch Brook School students are encouraged to become learners who exhibit positive attitudes in the academic, emotional and social arenas of their lives. The school's staff persistently challenges the students to learn through real life discovery experiences, thus enhancing their sense of personal competence and self-esteem, while focusing on the process of learning. Within this nurturing and stimulating setting, the school continues to empower the students to take responsibility for their own learning and foster a level of maturity in which students discover the intrinsic value in the concept that "learning is its own reward".

### **Logan Elementary School, Logan Township School District**

Logan Township as a community has a strong belief in equity that is expressed in the school district's policies and practices. Logan Elementary School has consistently strong scores on state testing in both language arts and mathematics that have been bolstered by the strong commitment to integrated technology which is used to support rigorous instruction. A two year professional

development initiative in differentiated instruction and a commitment to arts integration further provide opportunities for students to achieve at high levels. These initiatives are rooted in a firm belief on the part of administration and staff that each child can and will learn if provided with the right opportunity.

### **Birches Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools**

<http://www.wtps.org/birches/index.html>

Birches Elementary School is a unique educational community where each child learns with confidence. Creative and innovative teaching practices, outstanding curriculum, exemplary professional development, extended school learning community, and significant improvement in literacy and mathematics underscore Birches Elementary School's commitment to excellence. Language arts/literacy scores increased nearly 50 percentage points, from 46% proficiency in 1999 to 94% in the same category on the 2004 NJ ASK test. In the same period, Mathematics scores rose 22 points from 68.8% proficient/advanced proficient to 91.2%. The school's documented increase in student performance is a direct result of the refinement of teaching strategies, the strengthening of the collaboration and collegiality among the professionals, and the delivery of consistent instruction across grade levels to achieve success for all and to leave "No Child Behind".

### **Wedgwood Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools**

<http://www.wtps.org/wdgwd/index.html>

Wedgwood Elementary School is fortunate to have a supportive, involved community and its teachers have taken advantage of the district's extensive Summer Professional Development Institute. Over a two-year period, teachers concentrated on charting the progress of the students' writing and explored new standards-based mathematics instruction. During this time, language arts proficiency scores rose. Wedgwood Elementary School administrators and staff want the students to experience a success that comes from the accomplishment of high expectations. At the same time they want to foster a positive feeling about the school, making the school an enjoyable, exciting experience.

### **Whitman Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools**

<http://www.wtps.org/whtmn/index.html>

Whitman Elementary School has demonstrated significant improvement by increasing their ESPA and NJ ASK scores by 12.5% over the past three years. This significant improvement is a direct result of the refinement of teaching strategies, the strengthening of the collaboration and collegiality among the professionals, and the consistent instruction across grade levels to meet the

diagnosed needs of all students. The school's language arts and mathematics programs incorporate a balanced literacy model, flexible grouping, differentiated instruction and Everyday Math instructional strategies. The school has worked closely with Rowan University and The College of New Jersey and other outside entities to develop new curricula and intensive programs geared toward raising achievement. The school reinforces language arts literacy strategies to help build a strong foundation and to attain high levels of achievement in meeting the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.

### **Mary J. Donohoe School, Bayonne Public Schools**

<http://www.bhs.bboed.org/schools/donohoe/index.htm>

Since 1999, Mary J. Donohoe School has seen an increase of 59.2% in Grade 4 literacy scores and a 53.2% increase in Grade 4 mathematics scores. The school's eighth grade mathematics scores have also increased by 18%. In 2003, the school was designated a Just for the Kids Benchmark School by the New Jersey Business Coalition for Education Excellence, in recognition of the students' consistent high-level performance on state-wide assessments. Mary J. Donohoe School was also the recipient of a 2004 Best Practice Award for its approach to teaching the writing process, and was also declared the 2004 Reading is Fundamental Community Reading Challenge Large Site State Champions. The schools continue to achieve educational excellence through high expectation of both faculty and students in meeting the academic challenges they face each and every day.

### **Cadwalader Elementary School, Trenton Public School District**

<http://www.trenton.k12.nj.us/cadwalader/>

Despite the challenges of a crime and poverty-ridden neighborhood, the students at Cadwalader Elementary School have excelled. The school has 83% of fourth graders scoring proficient in language arts, highest in the district and a 33 point increase over the past several years. Additionally, 50% of the students passed the mathematics portion of the NJ ASK, a 16 point jump over the same time period. The school has had a long history of trying all viable programs it felt would give its students the opportunity to ensure a successful conclusion at the end of each new school term. Cadwalader Elementary School feels validated by the steady growth it has been showing over the past thirteen years on its standardized test results. It contributes this success to the caring and dedicated staff as well as the parents and the community.

### **Conackamack Middle School, Piscataway Township School District**

<http://www.familyeducation.com/site/0,1876,34749-36934-38-2683,00.html>

Conackamack Middle School has effectively demonstrated the importance of strategic planning in delivering rigorous and effective instruction to all students. The implementation of the plans it developed has resulted in substantial increases in the percentage of its students who are proficient or advanced proficient on the GEPA, across subgroups. Additionally, it has substantially reduced the numbers of students receiving final grades of D or F in core content subjects. Highlights of the plan include professional development, use of community resources, data analysis, diagnostic and prescriptive teaching tailored to the individual needs of students, and incorporation of building level and district resources into a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that enhances learning for all children.

### **Martin Luther King Intermediate School, Piscataway Township Schools**

<http://www.myschoolonline.com/site/0,1876,34749-36933-38-3642,00.html>

Martin Luther King Intermediate School's designation as a 2004 Governor's School of Excellence Award winner is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the faculty and students of the school combined with the support of the school's families. Gains in literacy, a reduction in incidences of violence and vandalism evidenced by a declining suspension rate, the school's Senior Reading Buddies program that partners special needs students with senior citizens, an autistic program that allows disabled and non-disabled peers to interact in a nurturing environment, and a "Soaring High" student recognition program are among the school's endeavors that have earned it this prestigious distinction. This is truly an award that the entire school community takes pride in earning.

### **Kennedy Park School #24, Woodbridge Township Schools**

[http://www.woodbridge.k12.nj.us/elementary\\_24.html](http://www.woodbridge.k12.nj.us/elementary_24.html)

Kennedy Park School serves a highly diverse and increasingly mobile population. The school is proud to receive this award because the award recognizes the broad and multi-faceted approach to the challenge it faces. Administrators and staff strive to create a sense of community and pride through citizenship and character-education programs, through award and incentive programs, and through parent outreach programs. The school provides assistance and enrichment through a variety of programs, not the least of which is extra help at lunchtime. Kennedy Park School has focused its professional development, school goals, and pupil performance objectives on improving instruction to meet state standards. It also enjoys the support of the community as demonstrated by

parent participation in monitoring schoolwork and attendance at family programs, by an active PTA, numerous volunteers, and partnerships. The school has successfully increased scores on state and local assessments because it recognizes that for a school to be successful, it has to focus its energies on what is most important: highly effective instruction presented by caring and compassionate teachers.

### **Matthew Jago School #28, Woodbridge Township Schools**

[http://www.woodbridge.k12.nj.us/elementary\\_28.html](http://www.woodbridge.k12.nj.us/elementary_28.html)

The faculty and staff of Matthew Jago School have engaged the entire community in an effort to provide a learning environment that succeeds in the mission of Putting Children First. The programs delivered at this site meet the individualized needs of all of the students while promoting high academic achievement for the school population of 60% regular education and 40% special education students. Collaboration with parents, community organizations and with Kean University in the form of a Professional Development School Program has enabled the staff to expand learning opportunities throughout the school day and into the evening. A district-wide Extended School Year Program is also conducted at the school for eligible classified students from throughout the district. The academic activities conducted through the delivery of many varied programs and experiences have clearly contributed to the continued strong performance of all students in terms of state-wide assessments.

### **Henry Hudson Regional School, Henry Hudson Regional School District**

<http://www.henryhudsonreg.k12.nj.us/>

This small school continues to provide a learning environment that creates productive students and involved citizens. The school provides a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned to the Core Content Standards and fosters high academic achievement among 463 students. The Henry Hudson Regional School District is committed to the philosophy and ideals of American democracy. Accordingly, it is committed to helping each pupil grow in his/her understanding, in his/her appreciation and in his/her participation in democracy as a way of life. Therefore, the school nurtures a willingness on the part of the pupil to accept his/her responsibilities as a citizen.

### **Wolf Hill Elementary School, Oceanport School District**

<http://www.oceanport.k12.nj.us/wolfhill.htm>

Wolf Hill Elementary School believes that there are several reasons why the school is deserving of this honor. First, the school has shown significant improvement among 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in the area of language arts literacy

scores on NJ ASK4. The second reason is the development of local performance tasks in the areas of reading and writing that were administered to all students during the fall and spring of last year. The results of these tasks provided the school with information that enabled it to make better decisions about necessary changes to the existing curriculum and instructional methods. The final reason is the movement of the school district over the past two years to develop a professional growth/support system that would provide training for the staff in areas identified as critical to the success of the district's goals for the students.

### **Mahala F. Atchison School, Tinton Falls School District**

<http://www.tfs.k12.nj.us/mfa/>

The Mahala F. Atchison School community is unique and innovative in its ability to come together to develop an educational plan tailored for its students. Multi-age, looping and traditional classrooms, and a Montessori Kindergarten class are just a few of the programs offered to the students. The school's language arts curriculum was enhanced through a school-wide book club that motivated students to read and allowed parents to volunteer as guest readers. Recognizing that a nurturing environment would lead to greater student success, staff development was conducted in the areas of Multiple Intelligence and Brain-Based learning. Just as they teach their students to build on their own strengths, the Mahala F. Atchison School faculty strives to model this philosophy.

### **Quinton Township School, Quinton Township School District**

The Quinton Township School is deserving of this award due to its ability to effectively use available resources to overcome obstacles related to poverty, to the desire of the staff to be involved in continuous improvement, and to the clear and focused school mission that is shared by the entire school and community. These characteristics, functioning within a structure of shared leadership and responsibility, have allowed Quinton Township School to achieve academic excellence in all areas. A positive learning environment is created at the school through a Student Expectations and Discipline Handbook, mandatory school uniforms, and extensive support services offered to the students such as the Pupil Assistance Committee, homework center, tutoring program, counseling, Reading Recovery, and in-class support remediation. Significant gains in the establishment of a balanced literacy program have resulted in exemplary school-wide test scores on both state and standardized assessments. In addition to the excellent literacy program, other criteria that were used to emphasize the worthiness of Quinton Township School for this award include extensive parental involvement, technology integration, relevant and sustained professional development and the successful establishment of a multi-age program for all early childhood and primary learners.